REVIEWS OF THE NEW AUTUMN FICTION

Norwegians in Rome

JENNY. By Sigrid Undset. Translated from the Norwegian by W. Emme Knopf.

"SIGRID UNDSET is the foremost woman writer in the Scandinavian countries today," announces the publisher of "Jenny." Therefore it must be that the novel is significant of the present trend of feminine—and feminist—thought, at least in Norway. And to those who at an earlier day read Ellen Key with bated breathings, or to those who still earlier were intrigued by that literature dubbed "the Ibscene or Scandalnavian," the significance of the Undset book is somewhat mystifying.

As a novel, however, to be enjoyed without qualms "Jenny" becomes to the reader an absorbing study of a girl art student, thwarted in her career by her sex instincts and by circumstances; thwarted in her eager motherhood by the death of her child, and finally accepting her own death as the one solution of a life that seemed insoluble.

Written with understanding and sympathy, the story is so frankly and naturally told that even the most squeamish of readers would never accuse the author of striving after effect in the scene after scene in which Jenny and her friend Cesca bare their inmost thoughts to themselves. In the hands of a popular English or American novelist one shudders at the inevitable sensationalism with which Jenny's reaction against her lover would be blared forth; and is grateful that there are still—scattered here and there in this country and abroad—a few writers who are more interested in the sincerity of their work than in the rapidity with which they can complete their annual quota of fiction.

We accept Jenny as an intensely human fellow creature from the moment in twilit Rome when she and Cesca are met by Helge Gram, who, like themselves, is a Norwegian student. The subsequent chapters, during which Jenny and Helge discover their potential love for each other, are a succession of intimate and fascinating pictures of Rome. To be sure, much of the serious student discussion does savor of a small town coeducational causerie—and in the picnics and love making one is continually tempted to read "campus" for "Campagna"—but so much the truer and more universal does the story seem.

When Jenny returns to Norway, however, we began to suspect the actual reason for the introspective vigils of our heroine. Jenny is an interesting person, true to life and all that; but she is also a thorough little middle class snob. Her emotional shortcomings, we deduce, are not so much due to her cold inability to respond passionately to Helge as to an inhibitory respect for the moral standards of her

Sigrid Undset.

neighbors. Consequently it is rather surprising that when Jenny does toss her cap over the windmill it should fall into the pleasant paternal hands of Gert Gram, Helge's father, who is unhappily married and very neighborly.

We did hope that Jenny would not prove quite so thoroughly middle class as she promised in the beginning. Surely in an artist of her latent possibilities there would develop broad-mindedness—a certain social instinct. We doubted, once she saw the roiled household of Helge's parents and commented to herself upon Helge's mother (Gert's wife)—a Strindbergian neurotic housewife. We gave up all hope of her wider vision when upon the threshold of her studio and her liaison with Gert Gram six-year-old Ausjen Mo furnished a revelation. Jenny, coming upon the tiny boy, offers to carry his heavy market basket for him. They walk down a block, the youngster chattering, and Jenny, remembering her stepbrother, Nils, when he too was tiny and dependent upon her, enjoys the encounter—for a moment. Then comes the shock:

"They had turned into another street. Jenny let go the boy's hand and looked at the basket. It was so heavy and Ausjen was so small—so she kept it, although she did not like to be seen with a poor little urchin in a good street. She would have liked to take him to the confectioner's, but thought it would be rather awkward if she met any one she knew there."

Jenny was never quite the same to us after that. We could not sympathetically turn from this episode which ends Part Two and leap across the gulf of a blank page in the time in which Jenny decided upon the windmill. Yet Part Three begins with Jenny at 6 o'clock in the evening stealing up to Gert Gram's rooms. To be sure she has carefully looked up and down the street before starting up the stairs, but the distance between the girl who hesitated beside Ausjen for fear of being seen and the girl who in one short winter has given herself to Gert and lies convincingly to her mother about her absences from home cannot be spanned adequately.

This broken span, however, is the one unsatisfying moment in the reading of the book. Once accepted, Jenny's affair with Gert carries on to absorbing moments of intense struggle between Jenny and her inhibitions, and one of the most dramatic climaxes in literature since Mrs. Nora Helmer's exit.

One thing more—we feel so grateful to the publisher for introducing "Jenny" to the American public that we should perhaps not complain of the more than occasional typographical errors which occur. Nevertheless, since "Jenny" is so widely announced as one of the first of the Borzoi-Gyllendal books to be published in this country as importations from the famous Scandinavian house of Gyllendal, may we hope for conscientious proofreaders to deal with "Jenny's" successors? It is a pity that so excellent a work of art should suffer from careless presentation.

CORNELIA P. LATHROP.

He Met the Sheriff's Daughter

THE SHERIFF OF SILVER BOW. By Berton Braley. The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

THIS book has been especially written for two kinds of people—those who went West last summer and those who wanted to but could not. Many of those who went, particularly those who took a stateroom through from St. Paul to San Francisco and were a little disappointed not to find the West "wilder," will get here what they missed then, and all those who wanted to go and could not will have a few fresh illusions to add to their ideas of Western life.

Perhaps the people of Butte, Mont., will not be flattered to see this picture of their home city. It is shown as an ideal spot for adventure but hardly a comfortable place for everyday life. With some of the best citizens discovered in the worst quarters and the city's marvellous mining system used for other purposes than mining, it seems scarcely the place to build up shattered nerves. However, for readers with strong constitutions, it provides a thrilling adventure and one that he will be sorry to finish.

The author considerately arranges matters so that we are not too suddenly thrown into a somewhat alien atmosphere. We reach the town in the company of Parks, a young man from Wisconsin who is out to see life in the West. There is no doubt about his accomplishing his purpose. From the first chapter he finds himself drawn into the mystery and intrigue that has followed the holdup of the Great West Limited and the murder of its leading characters through his eyes, and we soon begin to form shrewd suspicions—most of which are wrong. Then, too, he meets Celia, the Sheriff's daughter, a young woman with an unusually long list of good qualities, and from the first time he sees her we know what will happen to him. As to Bill Broderick, the Sheriff—but it would not be fair to give any one even the slightest hint about the Sheriff. To most of us the only association we have with that official is in making a cross with a black lead pencil beside an unfamiliar name some time in November, but out West a Sheriff still has his original power. And Broderick makes the most of it.

The book is written in a pleasant, breezy style that is well suited to its subject. The author is interested in action, clean straight adventure and no frills. But his sense of humor comes right along with the rest and gives the reader the feeling that no matter how tight the pinch he has never lost his head. He does not take any of it too seriously. You feel that he has had an awfully good time writing it.

It is a story that a great many people will enjoy. It can be especially

Berton Braley.

recommended for winter evenings. The courage of young Parks (which is nothing less than recklessness at times) will make every feminine reader yearn to hang on to his coattails, but she will not like him the less for that. It is a book worth trying, but warn the children first not to interrupt you.

EDITH LEIGHTON.

Society Can Reclaim Many Offenders

THE EMPTY SACK. By Basil King. Harper Brothers.

IT is an especial service at this time for an author of widely read fiction, without stating a conclusion or mentioning "sociology" as such, to expose the emptiness and shallowness of the "class warfare" conception of society. The instincts of the elder Mr. Collingham, the banker, are in constant revolt against mechanical ideas of efficiency and against a system of employment which in former days took for granted that a banking or commercial house was not concerned with the moral, social, physical or spiritual welfare of its employees or of the members of their families. Unquestionably, were he a manufacturer his instincts would also rebel against conditions because of which a crowd of men would appear at his company's gates every morning, each filled with the hope that perhaps a regular employee might be sick or might have overslept and that an additional man might be needed for at least a day's temporary service.

It is clear throughout the book that Collingham is as much a slave to an inadequate and shortsighted system of business as is his aged employee, Josiah Follett. The author does not let either appear as personally blameless for their inability to break the fetters which bind them. He forces recognition of the fact that many business men and many workmen are not capable of rising to a new plane where the working man and the business man cooperate upon an intelligent basis. This is a striking way to indicate the need for leadership of the highest order in business, in industry and among workingmen. The empty sacks cannot stand upright in themselves, neither can the blind lead the blind.

The author does not say that business men or industry must become responsible for their old employees after they are no longer able to compete successfully with the rising generation, neither does he say that the individual who does not save and prepare against the deficiencies of old age should be held blameless for his misfortunes. He drives home with great force the fact that blaming the employer or blaming the individual will bring about no solution. He leaves us with the uncomfortable feeling that we are rather shortsighted and very poor managers if we cannot devise a means of meeting such difficulties, especially in view of our very remarkable mechanical and industrial achievements.

Robert Bradley Collingham, Jr., has learned from the war that the son of the banker and the son of the candlestick maker were likely to be equally good soldiers at the fighting front. The idea influenced him upon his return, and while he was probably incapable of thinking out a proper course of action, his heart and his instincts led him to do the right thing in particular circumstances. He was capable of responding to the right appeal.

Teddy Follett, the untrained misfit, generous of mind and heart, well intentioned but somewhat weak, who is a victim of the social and economic system, is a lovable character in many ways. His career is an example of our failure to find the right man for the right job, and also of our inability to discover how to train people to do the things for which they have a special aptitude. We are not even able to get the men and the jobs together. Here we have one of the fundamental defects of our system of public education, the serious nature of which is brought home to managers of public institutions almost every hour of every day.

The application of mental tests during the war showed that more than half the army did not have the intelligence and adaptability to graduate from a high school as it is now constituted. It also showed that those incapable of profiting by the present type of education could profit to the utmost by a proper kind of education which would recognize aptitudes and base training thereon instead of unwisely assuming that men have similar abilities any more frequently than they have similar loops and whorls on the tips of their fingers.

Interesting experiments carried on at the New Jersey State Home for Boys at Jamesburg have shown that through proper medical treatment, diet and educational work boys who come into the institution three years retarded for their age and grade in the public schools are frequently found to be retarded but one year after a year's stay in the home. Experience at the same home has also indicated that many children have distinct manual ability, whereas others have distinct verbal ability, and that any proper system of education or industrial employment must take cognizance of these facts.

Undoubtedly, if industry is ever to overcome the prevailing unrest among workingmen who, perhaps unconsciously, are rebelling against treadmill work and are hungering and thirsting after a chance to express themselves in creative effort, it must have its own system of assorting its employees, of training them along the lines of their special abilities and of furnishing them work where they will have an opportunity to advance. There is nothing inherently unsound or unsurmountable in carrying out such an industrial policy, for what industry is there which is not suffering from a lack of skill among its workingmen, from an enormous labor turnover and from failure of the employees to become sufficiently interested in the work of the plant so that they feel and make others feel that it is their own?

The author has been equally fair in handling the subject of capital punishment. He helps the reader to understand, as judges, prosecutors and institutional administrators know from experience, that there are many different types of offenders, some of whom are what we call casual or environmental offenders. Teddy Follett is clearly one of these. It seems unintelligent to treat him exactly as we treat a degenerate member of one of our criminal gangs who kills "his man," whom he never has seen or known, for a miserable thirty pieces of silver. The author does not attempt to say that capital punishment is wholly wrong. He contents himself with showing that it is revolting to our better instincts, in this particular case, at least, of unpremeditated murder. Presumptively, the author did mean us to feel that it would be unjust in every case of unpremeditated murder, but he does not say so or lead us necessarily to that conclusion.

The author does not go into a discussion of the age long conflict between the individual and the State, but it is entirely apparent that before we can improve the administration of law we must get back to the broad, humane and enduring foundations of law and of public policy. As pointed out by Dean Roscoe Pound of the Harvard Law School:

"We need to observe that legal history shows a continual movement back and forth between an extreme solicitude for the general security and the security of social institutions, leading to minimum of regard for the interest of the individual accused and reliance upon summary, unhampered, arbitrary administrative punitive justice and at the other extreme excessive solicitude for the social interest in the individual life, leading to a minimum of regard for the general security and security of social institutions and reliance upon strictly regulated judicial punitive justice, hampered at all points by checks and balances and technical obstacles." To which he adds, elsewhere, this conclusion:

"The reports are coming to be filled with speeches of prosecutors for which we can only find a parallel in the harangues of Jeffreys and his colleagues. . . . Excessive securing of the technical rights of accused persons in the nineteenth century produced the third degree just as the excessive zeal of prosecutors, browbeating of witnesses and unreasonable searches of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced the criminal procedure of the nineteenth century."

Our greatest work can be done with the environmental or social offenders. It is our hope that "The Empty Sack" and books like it will lead the people to appreciate the necessity for the individual consideration of every case of wrongdoing and the sanity of individual treatment of each and every offender. "Murder may be murder," but a careful examination will show that every murderer differs from another murderer, and that the circumstances under which each crime is committed and the social backgrounds are essentially different. The whole conception of a jury to judge between the law and the offender is proof positive that from the most ancient times the conscience of mankind and the best traditions of the law have been in conflict with that essentially brutal idea that the law can be enforced without respect of persons. Because of its expression of this truth, "The Empty Sack," in my judgment, is a much more important book than "Main Street."

BURDETTE G. LEWIS,
State Commissioner of Institutions and Agencies of New Jersey, Author of "The Offender."

The Book Factory.

By EDWARD ANTHONY.

Impious Impressions.

8. AMY LOWELL.

The lady's a vender of toy balloons,
As I am a sinner, she is!
She has a good line and her salesmanship's fine—
No wonder she's doing the biz!

Oh, buy a balloon! She has purple and pink
And lavender—talk of the town!
And some that are blue (a most popular hue)
And yellow and orange and brown!

She's blocking the traffic on Main Street, she is,
With people who gather and stare
In boyish delight at the wonderful sight
Of these colors afloat in the air.

If ever I'm rich I'll buy all her balloons
Or, at any rate, several cases
And wait for a breeze, and in comfort and ease
I'll float to Olympian places!

NEGLECTING LIGHT VERSE.

Bessie Graham's able "The Bookman's Manual" has one striking weakness. It neglects the field of American light verse; Christopher Morley and T. A. Daly are the only humorous versifiers mentioned. There is mention of Carolyn Wells, but only as anthologist. There is not a line in the book about Franklin P. Adams, Arthur Guiterman, Oliver Herford, Bert Leston Taylor, Don Marquis or Ted Robinson. While this is a serious omission it is not a surprising one. It is characteristic of the attitude of most compilers. They apparently do not know that light verse exists.

This, you say, is the fault of the light verse brigade; if they do not get more recognition it is because they do not do better work. You are wrong. (We are going to argue with you whether you want to or not.) American light verse—at least the work of the big leaguers we have mentioned—is an excellent product. The reason why more attention isn't paid to it is that it has become fashionable to dismiss the writer of humor—both prose and poetry—with a patronizing word or two, like "amusing" or "rather good fun." No one seems aware of the fact that George Ade is an important figure in American literature or that Arthur Guiterman's "Ballads of Old New York" is worthy of a place beside Edith Wharton's "The Age of Innocence" in the literature of Manhattan Isle.

As soon as we are admitted to the United Protective and Benevolent Brotherhood of American Humorists—(we once wrote a funny line which has been submitted to the Committee on New Members and we are hopeful)—we shall try to induce the brotherhood to declare war on all those who patronize, overlook or sass the humorist. When we have killed off all American offenders we mean to open a London office and drown in the Thames that long line of English critics (including the blissfully ignorant or wilfully indifferent Harold Williams) who have failed, these many years, to give the immortal Gilbert a square deal.

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THE JOURNAL OF CARLO KNIGHT, FREE LANCE.

Monday—I discover an important piece of information in Frank Swinnerton's "Coquette." Would be blondes, according to Swinnerton, can get better results with henna than with peroxide. . . . I *told* Henrietta not to use peroxide. I *knew* it wouldn't turn out right. I'm going to make her do it over again with henna.

Tuesday—I feel so righteous after reading a few chapters of Hall Caine's "The Master of Man" that I offer my services as a speaker to every reform bureau in the country.

Wednesday—Get a job writing autographs for a busy author. "The more modest the inscriptions you write the more I'll pay you," he says to me. "People like a humble author. Make the recipients of these free copies—all of them important people—think me a genius who doesn't realize what he has accomplished."

"I get the idea, sir," say I and proceed to inscribe the first copy, "This is a bum book, but what do you want for nothing?"

He fires me. Gosh! there's no pleasing some people.

Thursday—Hard at work on the International Art Fraternity's Movement to Introduce Art in America, for which movement I am publicity im-

presario (to appropriate a phrase of Horace Liveright's).

"Art," says Simon Knadel of Hawaii, president of the movement, "begins with the soul. Impress that on your American artists—I mean dabblers in art; you have no artists. Write a song about it. A campaign like this needs one."

"Yes, sir," I meekly answer.

"Impress upon them," he continues, after he has scored his novel point, "that the primary object of art is to reproduce the soul of a person or thing. Only the soul counts."

"What about the solar plexus?" I ask.

"That's important, too," he replies, "but it cannot begin to compare with the soul."

"I see," say I, meeker than ever.

Friday and Saturday—I write the song Simon Knadel requested. It is called "Song of the Soul Painters." Here it is for your edification:

SONG OF THE SOUL PAINTERS.

(Studio Chant.)

No doubt you've heard of art—
Well, we are artists all,
For we can etch and paint and sketch
Upon a moment's call
We'll paint you anything
From nudes to barber poles,
But there's no fun when all is done
Like painting people's souls!

CHORUS:
Oh, art is so divine!
'Tis soothing to be in it!
Without my art I'm sure my heart
Would break this very minute!

It must be quite a bore
To be like other folk
And not to etch or paint or sketch
Or draw a single stroke!
It comforts me, my art,
When things are dark and dole.
It's here I rush and grab a brush
And paint the human soul!

CHORUS:
Oh, art is so divine, &c.

It may come as a surprise to many of Gen. Dawes's admirers to find his name as a composer in a late record catalogue of a melody in A major played by Kreisler. But those who know the Director of the Budget intimately or have read his "Journal of the Great War" already are aware of his gifts as a musician. Music of the very highest type was a constant source of relaxation to him during the tremendous strain of his war service. Both as a composer and as a musician, we are told, he is one of the most distinguished amateurs in the country.